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Whoever Runs Check Machine Runs Domingo

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There is only one check-writing machine in all of the Dominican Republic, and in the weird and tangled crisis that faces Washington, the question of who controls the check-writing machine has assumed major importance.

Since the war began a month ago, the United States has pumped more than \$7.5 million into the Dominican Republic to pay the army and other government employees and to keep the economy from collapsing. Whoever controls the check-writing machine controls where the money goes.

Consequently, State Department diplomats were relieved to learn Friday that the Organization of American States—and not either faction in the Dominican struggle—now has custody of the check-writing machine, and of the central bank.

Dr. Jose A. Mora, Uruguayan diplomat and Secretary General of the OAS, announced that henceforth U.S. funds would be used to pay the troops of both sides in the revolt. Bolled down, it means that Gen. Antonio Imbert, leader of the junta set up with U.S. encouragement on May 9, no longer controls the check-writing machine—and the dough.

SYMBOLIC

It is perhaps symbolic, and a measure of the zany overtones of the Caribbean crisis, that Washington was relieved to know that U.S. taxpayer dollars are now going not only to the forces headed by the trigger man in the slaying of Gen. Rafael L. Trujillo, but also to the forces which President Johnson told the nation May 2 had been "taken over" by "a band of Communist conspirators."

The truth is that the Johnson administration would dearly love to wash its hands of the Dominican crisis and turn the problem over to the OAS.

It's not that simple. The United States, aside from footing the bill for the Dominican civil service payroll, has found itself in the difficult role of political mediator, attempting to build a coalition government that would conciliate both sides in the revolt.

Aside from this central problem, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Presidential emissary McGeorge Bundy found themselves dealing last week with the subsidiary problem of the Disappearing Communists and a mysterious troublesome news leak.

Mr. Bundy, much like agent 007, flew on a secret mission to Santo Domingo on May 15 with three other top Administration officials. For twelve days he attempted to get both sides to agree to an interim government headed by Antonio Guzman, wealthy land owner and former agriculture minister under President Juan Bosch.

Since Dale Carnegie would never recommend calling people names while trying to win friends, Mr. Bundy presumably did not tell Col. Francisco Caamano Deneo and his rebels that they were a bunch of Communist conspirators. Little was heard of the list 58 Communists disseminated by Washington 10 days before Mr. Bundy arrived in Santo Domingo.

By the time Mr. Bundy returned to Washington last Wednesday, Mr. Rusk had already grappled (that morning) with the question of what had happened to the Communists. "I think that threat has been very substantially reduced, although not completely eliminated," he said at his press conference.

When reporters pressed to find out precisely where the Communists had gone, the Secretary replied: "Well, we suspect that some of them have, shall we say, returned underground, but that others are active and are known to be there."

Earlier in the week, on Monday, somebody tried to end Mr. Bundy's first major overseas effort at personal diplomacy with a blunderbuss. With the Presidential aid attempting to build a government around Mr. Guzman, someone leaked an auditor's report alleging a \$75,000,000 discrepancy in the books of a bank of which Mr. Guzman is a director.

The story appeared in the Washington Daily News, a Scripps-Howard newspaper, under the byline of John T. O'Rourke, its editor. It said the audit, by the firm of Ernst & Ernst, had disclosed widespread irregularities in the Banco Agricola in Santo Domingo.

THE SOURCE

Had someone in the U. S. government been trying to shoot Mr. Guzman down as coalition president? It looked like it might by that way, but U. S. officials have apparently identified the source of the leak, and they insist on a stack of bananas that it came from outside the Administration.

Despite various claims to the contrary, it is understood that the still-confidential report by Ernst & Ernst, a world-wide Cleveland-based accounting firm with offices in 75 countries, was dated May 31, 1964, and did cover part of the period that Mr. Guzman was a bank director. However, those who have studied it say the audit in no way reflects on Mr. Guzman.

Twenty-five copies were sent by Ernst & Ernst to the bank when the report was completed last November; the bank in turn distributed copies to various agencies, including some U. S. government officials. When the story broke last Monday, U. S. investigators were quietly dispatched to talk to Ernst & Ernst officials. They were apparently satisfied that the study did not reflect on Mr. Guzman, because Mr. Rusk said Wednesday, "We do not have any indication that Mr. Guzman has been involved in irregularities."

But the episode added one more twist and turn to an already labyrinthine path in the Dominican crisis.

More formidable obstacles, it was learned, have been posed in the effort to get both sides to agree to a Guzman government. These stumbling blocks were the reasons that Mr. Bundy came back encouraged, but with success eluding his grasp.

There were three sticking points in the Bundy talks. First, who would be Minister of Defense in the coalition government? The Minister of Defense controls the army and the army is the key to power in the revolt-torn country.

Second was the question of how many leaders of the junta and rebels would have to step aside. There was agreement that neither Gen. Imbert nor Col. Caamano could very well serve in a caretaker government, but the problem was how far down the line to go; how many other important figures in each camp would be barred from the compromise government.

Third was the problem of how the new government would go about keeping any Communists out of power and cleansing any remaining Communists from the rebel movement.

No small questions, and it is little wonder that Mr. Rusk, at his press conference last Wednesday, stated drily: "There is certain unfinished business still in front of us."